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The Lupa Liturgy

By Lupa

Shamelessly Self-Published For the Hell of It, 2007

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About the Author

Lupa was born in the late 1970s and currently resides in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and fellow author, Taylor Ellwood. She is an artist who creates magical jewelry, ritual tools and sacred items out of fur, bone, leather, feathers, beads and other such things. She is also a published author (you can't miss the listing of books right below this bio) and has had articles featured in newWitch, PanGaia, Sagewoman, Circle, If... Journal, Witchvox, The Wiccan/Pagan Times, Key23, Rending the Veil, and many other hardcopy magazines and ezines (Googlemanity will help you find more information on any of these fine publications). She, Taylor, and their respective creative pursuits may be found online at <http://www.thegreenwolf.com>.

Other Books By Lupa – Available from Immanion Press/Megalithica Books (<http://www.immanion-press.com>)

Fang and Fur, Blood and Bone: A Primal Guide to Animal Magic (2006)

Magick on the Edge: An Anthology of Experimental Magick (2007) – contributed “Totems and Transformation” and cowrote “Evoking Lupa” with Taylor Ellwood

A Field Guide to Otherkin (2007)

Kink Magic: Sex Magic Beyond Vanilla (November 2007, with Taylor Ellwood)

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Introduction

This is a little bit of an experiment. This book isn't meant to be particularly formal; hence my decision to self-publish. My other books are all professionally published through Immanion Press¹, for whom I am an author, associate editor, and nonfiction promo/publicity manager.

While I love working with Immanion, the focus there is primarily on experimental magical texts. This book deals more with my spirituality, though there is some magic mixed in with the rest. I was inspired to write this after discussing some of my personal religion on my blog². I made a post a few days later asking if people would be interested in reading more about the spiritual aspects of my life—and got a pretty decent response!

The average self-published book sells only a couple of hundred copies at the most. I figure this one will be the same, though the free ebook may get a decent bit of circulation. I don't expect to make money on this—but that's not the point. I wanted to offer interested folks a chance to read the nitty-gritty on my personal belief system. The printed version, offered at cost, is just an option for those of us who find ebooks intolerably difficult to read because of the format (or who simply prefer the aesthetic appeal of dead tree books). Think of it as a very long blog post, with some added editing and formatting to clean it up. I'm doing it for the fun, the curiosity of others, and a chance to practice my layout skills.

So welcome to my path; walk with me a while. This isn't holy writ or an uber-serious religious text. It's incredibly important to me on a personal level, but you're free to take it as you will.

¹ See <http://www.immanion-press.com> for more details.

² <http://lupabitch.livejournal.com>

Chapter One: Natural History

Oh, goody! Here's where I get to talk about myself.

Actually, wait. That's part of the point of this whole book, isn't it?

At any rate, let me give you some background as to where I'm coming from; it'll provide some context for the rest of the material.

I was raised Catholic and did most of my growing up in semi-rural Missouri. From a very young age I was fascinated by the natural world. I remember being a toddler, hiding under the huge juniper tree in front of our house, and playing with roly-polies and toads (about the only animals slow enough for me to catch!). As I got older, I graduated to catching (and releasing) garter snakes, box turtles, and various insects in the woods near my home. I even enjoyed fishing for a number of years, until I figured out that having a hook stuck in your mouth probably isn't much fun, and that I really didn't want to do such a thing unless I was specifically out to get food.

What I remember the most, though, was being absolutely fascinated by nature, animals in particular. The first time I saw a monarch butterfly chrysalis for real, instead of in a book, it was a small miracle for me. I guarded that area of the woods like my life depended on it, and was rewarded by getting to see the brand new butterfly hanging off the branch, letting his wings dry and fill with blood so s/he could start his newest stage of life.

This was my introduction to the cycles of nature which I hold sacred. My fascination continued into my seventeenth year, when I was introduced to magic and paganism through several friends of mine. I spent the first two years reading and studying everything I could get my hands on—I was interested in everything! I wanted to learn about runes, and herbs, and totems, and Wicca, and Druidry, and stones, and faeries, and all kinds of stuff. Unfortunately, I didn't have access to many books, and the internet wasn't nearly as full of information as it is now (though it did have some good resources nonetheless).

My two earliest influences were solitary Wicca/neo-Wicca/You can't call that Wicca because you weren't initiated! and neoshamanism/plastic shamanism/white people pretending to be Indians. While I figured out the background to my sources over the years, I did get some good material for my personal practice out of them. Probably the two most influential authors for me were Scott Cunningham and Ted Andrews, though miscellaneous other books in the aforementioned genres made early appearances. While I realize that, for example, I started calling the deities of the land and sky Earth Mother and Sky Father because of plastic shamanism books I read, I have found that these names for those deities are the ones that resonate with me. So I continue to use what works for me, while acknowledging my source material.

February 8 is a personal holiday for me, because on that night in 1998, Artemis came and taught me to dance. I had just gotten home from seeing my boyfriend, someone with whom I had a deteriorating relationship. It was just a couple of days before the peak of the full moon, and the silver light shone into my room. I had never danced before, being too shy and self-conscious. But at that moment, illuminated by the face of the goddess above me, something moved me, and I began to slowly sway, then danced faster and faster around the room. I let the energy of the Huntress flow into me, and we danced together for what seemed like hours. Finally, exhausted, I went to sleep. But from that night on, I considered myself a pagan.

In the years since, I've been in all sorts of interesting magical places. My primary focus has always been animal magic—totemism, familiars, shapeshifting, etc. I also enjoy making magical pouches, and I'll give a couple of samples later on in the book just for fun. I also read runes (handmade, elder futhark) early on, then switched over to tarot (Shapeshifter Tarot, and later on the Thoth deck) and totem cards (Animal-Wise deck, still use it to this day).

I've always been primarily solitary. I had a brief time spent with an open circle at one point, and a year and a day with a teacher that never really worked out. But for the most part I've been on my own in my path, and that suits me just fine. What I've developed is individualized enough that I would have trouble finding a group I meshed with anyway. I did, however, do a partial novitiate with the Illuminates of Thanateros, a Chaos magic organization, a few years back. That was right about the time my life exploded—but I'll get to that in a moment.

Speaking of Chaos magic, I was mostly generically neopagan in my outlook until 2003 when my friend, Nicholas Graham³, introduced me to Chaos magic via Peter J. Carroll's *Liber Null and Psychonaut*. I'd actually read the book in 2002 but it hadn't really sunk in. Nick and I worked together during the third shift at a microbiology lab for about a year and a half, and we spent a lot of time talking shop. He explained the concepts I'd missed, and I soon found myself fascinated by this incredibly practical, versatile approach to magic. It left an indelible mark on me, and has made my magical practice much more prominent and exploratory.

The summer of 2004 was a big one for me. I had really started to hit my stride with Chaos magic, and was practicing more magic than I had ever done. My personal life was pretty crazy at the time. I moved three times in eight months that year, had two major relationship breakups, and had a number of other big changes come through during that time. That summer saw more experiments out of me than any other time in my life. I participated in my first Goetic evocation, worked with Papa Legba a la Hyatt and Black's *Urban Voodoo*⁴, and experimented with my

³ Author of *The Four Powers: Magical Practice for Beginners of All Ages* (Immanion Press/Megalithica Books, 2007). He's also one of the folks heavily involved with Rending the Veil (<http://www.rendingtheveil.com>) and is one of my very best friends. I owe him a lot for that.

⁴ New Falcon, 1993.

personality by splitting myself into four personae (but not separate personalities) using some of the material from Robert Anton Wilson's *Prometheus Rising*⁵.

But I lived to see the end of 2004, and continued to grow. The last big influence on my path was back in 2005. I had just read the first issue of Konton Magazine, a chaos magic periodical edited by D.J. Lawrence of <http://www.chaosmagic.com>⁶. I decided to post a review of it on a chaos magic community I was on at Livejournal. One of the points I made was that I had really enjoyed all the articles except one, but didn't specify which it was. One of the people who had written for that issue replied and asked (politely) if it had been his article that was at fault. The answer was no, and that was how I met my fellow author, Taylor Ellwood⁷.

To make a long story short, I first fell in love with his writing, and then I fell in love with him. We shared a lot in common as far as our philosophies on magic went. Both of us were interested in experimenting with magic, and both of us were open to new ideas and angles. We got along in pretty much every other way, too, and the rest was history. We were married on July 8, 2006 and handfasted a week later—a year and a day after we first met in person at Sirius Rising at Brushwood in New York⁸. He is my magical mate and my companion, my editor and advisor, and offers me both moral and immoral support. We've influenced each other quite a bit even though we maintain our own separate paths, and we couldn't be happier.

So that's the nickel tour of my life. There's a lot more that I can't fit in here, but I have better things to do than write out an autobiography based on 28 years. Still, I hope this has given you at least some insight as to where I'm coming from. Of course, you can always ask me if there's something specific you want to know. No guarantees on answers, of course, but email is free!

Reality According to Lupa

I am an animist and a panentheist. The former simply means I believe that all things have spirits. The latter signifies that I believe that the Divine is embodied within all things. The combination that makes up my understanding of reality can basically be summed up as: the Divine is the spark of spirit that is within all things—and not just “living” ones. I extend spirit to everything—animals, plants, rocks, technological devices, etc. I believe that consciousness comes in more forms than just the ones we're familiar with, and that it's partly our fault for not paying enough attention. This is also why consciousness-based arguments for

⁵ New Falcon, 1992.

⁶ Chaosmagic.com is currently out of commission; however, at this time back issues of Konton magazine are still available via Café Press at <http://www.cafepress.com/chaosmagick>.

⁷ Author of *Pop Culture Magick*, *Space/Time Magic* and *Inner Alchemy* (all Immanion Press/Megalithica Books, 2004, 2005 and 2007 respectively). He's also the editor of the *Magick on the Edge* anthology (Immanion/Megalithica 2007), and our cowritten essay in it goes into more depth about the magic that went into our meeting.

⁸ See <http://www.brushwood.com>. To this day this is still one of our favorite pagan festivals. Highly recommended.

vegetarianism and veganism don't work on me. I see the uprooting and decapitation of a carrot in much the same way as the slaughter of a chicken. My question isn't "Am I eating meat?", but rather "How did my food live and die?" Organic produce and free range meat are what I consider humane eating, and I eventually intend to raise my own meat and produce when time, space and resources allow.

I see reality as a multilayered thing. While I think that linear time is something that we all agree upon while in this particular slice of the Universe, I think that space and time go far beyond the linear when you consider reality as a whole. I observe both my personal microcosm and my place in the macrocosm as a whole. There are many parallels between these two spheres of perception; they are more interrelated than many people think. As Above, So Below equals As Within, So Without. Magic is the art of manifesting Desire into Reality, and changes that we cause outside of ourselves must begin inside us.

Oh, yes. Magic. Magic is a wonderful thing. It's realizing that reality is incredibly subjective, and that my personal reality can be shaped by my desires and actions—even seemingly acausal ones. Saying a prayer over a candle, visualizing energy flowing into it, and then burning it may not seem to have anything to do with the outcome of a job interview, but the connection is there nonetheless. I combine the energetic and psychological models of magic; while internally I believe that psychology is what flips the triggers of magic that works, I also believe that energy is the external equivalent. Whether that energy can ultimately be measured or not doesn't matter to me; what matters is that it works, and that I can trace my techniques to refine them and get better results. As Taylor has often told me, you have to know how you got a particular result to either modify it or pass it on to someone else.

This probably isn't surprising to those who know me, but I don't believe in "black" or "white" magic, though I do sometimes use the Chaos magic color categories. I don't believe in the bastardized version of Karma found in New Agery, or the Threefold Law, or any other across-the-board moral code. I do believe that actions have consequences (even basic physics knows that) but that they're not as predictable as we'd like to think (quantum physics, anyone?). To wit, if you're an asshole to everyone you meet, it stands to reason that the only people who may be your friends may be other assholes. On the other hand, what constitutes an asshole is relative. I know people who I consider to be assholes who have friends who think they're pretty decent folks; they may even think I'm an asshole. Basically, I try to be nice to people, and I do my best to see things from the other guy's perspective when I can. I'm not perfect, and I doubt I'll achieve that any time soon. But I do my best, which is about all anyone can really shoot for.

I don't consider myself a member of any particular tradition or culture; I am a modern American neopagan of European mutt descent, raised in a middle class household, and that is the perspective that informs my path. I really have no particular interest in any of the cultures my ancestors came from (a wide variety of cultures across Europe, from England to Czechoslovakia). If anything, I resonate

with the various subcultures I'm a part of—the pagan community, Otherkin, the BDSM/fetish scene, etc. My interest lies in various techniques, not particular cultures; rather than wanting to study, say, Lakota spirituality, I'm interested in how people around the world, including modern pagans, work with totems and other animal spirits.

I'm also quite fond of Unverified Personal Gnosis (UPG). I'm aware of the differences between UPG and actual historical research, as well as the potential pitfalls of not checking one's UPG against the common conception of reality. However, a lot of my path is UPG based, both spiritually and magically.

I don't really have any problems with any other religion. I figure we're all headed in the same general direction, and it's up to the individual to find his own path. I know there are a number of pagans who are rabidly anti-Christian. I don't get that. Christianity is just a religion, a path. It can be abused by those who have agendas, or it can be used to ascend in one's personal evolution. The same is true of any religion. There's no such thing as an evil religion, as far as I'm concerned.

That's my understanding of what is commonly referred to as reality. It's just as subjective as anyone else's, and I make no claims about its truth, efficacy, or ability to remove stains from your soul (or sole, if you have a habit of rehabilitating secondhand fish).

So now, in theory, you know more about me than you ever cared to know, and you're ready for a change of pace. Well, good news—so am I! Let's talk about someone else for a change—the FFG.

Chapter Two: Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here

My “Friends, Family and Guardians” (FFG) is a term that I used to collectively refer to all the spiritual beings who are a part of my life to one extent or another. Who are the noncorporeal players in this drama? Many of them are animal totems, though there are deities, ancestral spirits, and others. I can’t list everyone who’s helped me become who I am today, but these are some of the most involved.

A Sampling of Deities

Artemis: This is the “Lady Huntress” I refer to in the prayers and rituals later in this book. As I explained earlier, Artemis was the one who first helped me to a decidedly pagan path. I honor her as the maiden huntress of Greek mythos, rather than the Ephesian mother goddess, though I acknowledge that aspect as well. I honor her more through emulation than worship. I’m not sure I’d go so far as to label myself an avatar; that term always struck me as a little more self-important than I’m really comfortable with. However, I do feel that I resemble her in a number of ways, and that internal connection is the way in which I give her her due. She seems content with the arrangement, and I think she understands that I’m really not the regular worship kind of person.

Artemis is independence personified, which has really rubbed off on my personal set of values. As I’ve grown, our relationship and what we both bring to the table has evolved. I believe that even if I wasn’t aware of it at the time, she watched over me as a child and helped me gain opportunities to appreciate both the wilderness and my freedom, things that she admires about me. I grew to understand her role as protector of women and the wild in my mid-teens when I had several negative experiences, some involving boys, and some involving the destruction of my sacred woods. Her active emergence in my life was part of the healing process from those traumas. Rather than advising me to abandon civilization and the male sex entirely, she simply cautioned me to be more aware of the choices I made in regards to both of these, and to be mindful of my own needs and independence when considering them. In hindsight, I can see where she quietly facilitated some necessary changes in getting me out of unhealthy situations as I went into my twenties and started out as a legally independent entity. Instead of forcing me to the best conclusion, she gave me the room to learn for myself—the best way for me to absorb the lessons therein.

Earth Mother and Sky Father: Nothing can live without the Earth and Sky. I have included these two in my evocations at pretty much every ritual from the beginning. I wouldn’t say my relationship is any more personal than anyone else’s—but considering I depend on them both for my very existence, I’d say that’s

pretty personal to begin with! I haven't worked with them as independent entities in the same way I work with, say, Artemis, but that doesn't make them any less important.

Lupa: "Lupa", to me, is more of a concept than a personal deity, though I also acknowledge her existence as such. Part of why I accepted this name for myself was because of the legend of this wolf of Rome. I have chosen not to have children in this life, but I have other "children" (such as my creative projects) that, while not made of my flesh and blood, do receive my nurturing. I've also studied the word "lupa" in a number of languages. In Latin, it means female wolf, but also "whore". The Spanish definition is "magnifying glass", while in Filipino "lupa" means earth or land. So depending on how you slice it, I'm either "the wolf who focuses on the earth" or "the most magnified whore in the land"!

But in all seriousness, I do have a reproduction of the famous Roman bronze statue of Lupa on my altar. While my relationship with her isn't as personal as it is with Artemis, I do respect this deity who has honored me with her name and her more quiet presence.

San: There are going to be some folks who would burn me at the stake for this (verbally, not literally). However, among my personal pantheon is San from *Mononoke Hime* (*The Princess Mononoke*). This is an anime/manga featuring a girl raised by wolves, named San. She is a pop culture deity, a member of modern mythology. She is a huntress goddess, similar to Artemis in many ways, though they're independent of each other. (I don't go for that whole "All god/desses are one god/dess" thing). She reminds me a lot of myself in a lot of ways, particularly my strong connection to all things lupine. I also connect myself as a therianthrope to her more strongly than most deities, because of what she represents—a wolf in human flesh. I haven't worked with her as extensively as Artemis, but I intend to do so in the future.

Bast: I have worked with Bast both as a feline deity and as the goddess of pleasure, often in conjunction with the totem Cat. She's not someone I have a lot of contact with, but I do have a statue of her on my altar to honor our past workings. She checks in every so often, but I can't say I have as strong a relationship with her as I do with, say, Artemis.

Anubis: I primarily work with him in regards to the proper handling of animal remains. While traditionally he's the overseer of mummification (which did include nonhuman animals), it's not too much of a stretch to also include the sacred care of the skins and bones of various nonhuman animals I work with.

Yes, I realize there's a decided lack of male deities here, other than Anubis. Believe me, I've tried connecting with gods. There just hasn't been anyone that I really felt comfortable with. Some of it, admittedly, is issues with male authority in general.

However, in recent years my gender identity has shifted from masculine female to spiritual androgyne in female flesh. As I've become more comfortable in myself as male as well as female, I've lost a lot of that mistrust of male deity.

This was confirmed for me on February 8, 2007 when I had my yearly long chat with Artemis. She said that she was planning on lessening her direct influence on my life to make room for an as-of-yet unidentified feminine male deity. As of late March the god hasn't shown up, though I can feel his approach on the edges of my consciousness. These things happen when all parties are ready, and I'm not about to hurry the situation and potentially spoil it. I have my suspicions, but I'm keeping them to myself.

I'm also curious about hermaphroditic/androgynous deities, of which there are a few. I'm particularly interested in the pop culture pantheon, the Dehara of Storm Constantine's *Wraeththu* mythos⁹. The two *Wraeththu* trilogies are dark fantasy/sci fi written by Storm that center on a race of androgynous beings who evolved from humanity in a postapocalyptic world. Storm, being a magician herself, wove quite a bit of actual magical theory into her creation (channeling?) of this world, and in recent years has produced a nonfiction, fully functional pop culture magical system based on *Wraeththu*¹⁰. The pantheon of this system are the Dehara, the gods of *Wraeththu*, and so far they are the deities that best represent what androgyny is in my life.

What the Totems Have Taught Me

Okay, okay—so I said that I'd never write a totem animal dictionary. Well, this isn't precisely a dictionary. It's more a record of what I have learned from various totems, rather than "This is what this totem means". I've included these for interests' sake, and because an explanation of my spiritual beliefs wouldn't be complete without them.

Wolf: Wolf has been my primary totem almost my entire life. It's sometimes hard to say what Wolf has taught me, because in a sense (particularly when taking therianthropy into consideration) Wolf taught me to be me. There's been a lot of influence from this particular totem on my life over the years, and it's not always stereotypically lupine. For example, I am not the most social of creatures; Wolf people are often stereotyped as being very pack-based, and so it's assumed that they like being around their friends and family a lot. However, one's totem (or, for that matter, therioside) does not solely define a person. Due to conditioning, I am

⁹ All of the *Wraeththu* books, including extensions written by other authors, may be found at the Immanion Press website, <http://www.immanion-press.com>; Storm started Immanion Press in 2002 as a way to keep her and other fantasy/sci fi authors' books in print for more than "the shelf life of a magazine", as she puts it. The first trilogy is also available stateside through Orb books, and the second through Tor. Amazon.com carries all of them.

¹⁰ At this time, the first of three nonfiction books is available via Immanion Press. *Grimoire Dehara: Kaimana* came out in 2006 and lays out the groundwork of this system.

not as social as I could be, and that simply comes from being human. On the other hand, wolf packs often disband for part of the year when small game is more plentiful—the pack is more necessary when going after larger, more dangerous game. I do try to maintain a good balance of “me” time to social time, whether with my mate or friends or family.

What I have gotten from Wolf is a lot of intensity. When Wolf interacts with others like hir, there’s always a lot of energy to it, even if the physical actions are subtle. Whether it’s a pack coming together again at the start of the big game season, or the confrontation between Alpha and Beta over the kill, or playing with this year’s pups, wolves don’t seem to do anything half-heartedly. (They’re even serious sleepers, and may sleep for several days after gorging on twenty pounds of meat at one sitting!) Wolf is my North animal.

Fox: Wolf’s intensity is one of the reasons Fox came into my life. Fox manifests to me as male, but a very feminine male. This gentler approach to life is something Fox has used to help me balance out Wolf’s intensity. The Lakota characterized Fox as Wolf’s smaller, gentler cousin, according to Joseph Epes Brown’s *Animals of the Soul*, and it seems quite fitting in my experience. Rather than getting defensive, Wolf allows Fox in at times when things are getting to be a little too much.

Fox is also the Magician. He has taught me an amount of flexibility through the practice of magic, and the ability to see through many different viewpoints—the Shapeshifter. Magic is actively causing conscious change in your life, and this totem has been an excellent guide not only in direct esoterica, but gender identity, emotional healing, and other areas of my life that have required some alteration. For this reason, Fox is one of my South animals, the fire of Change.

Deer: Deer is actually one of my older totems, though one that I’ve all too often taken for granted. He originally made himself known to me as the Dreamkeeper; the first skull I ever painted for magical purposes was an eight point whitetail buck skull that served to protect me in my dreams.

However, I’ve recently started dancing Deer as well, and we’ve touched on some new ideas. First, Deer is a survivor. Predators, even those that are hunted by other animals (humans included) don’t quite understand survival the way that a prey animal does (it’s not more or less important, just different). Deer teaches a new way to survive in this world, with its dangers and challenges. Deer also teaches grace and decorum—and this ties in nicely with survival. Often it is one’s words that make one a success in this world, and being able to speak well can be a major asset.

Lynx: Choosing my words carefully is also a lesson from Lynx, one of the newest totems I’ve worked with. However, where Deer simply teaches how to be smooth and confident in one’s speech, Lynx is the teacher of when to speak, and when to be silent. That’s as far as we’ve gotten thus far, though still waters run deep. Lynx is also currently one of my South animals.

Bear: This is another one who's been around pretty much from the beginning. I actually acknowledge two bears, Grandfather Silvertip and Grandmother Silverclaw. I asked them their names after reading *Giving Voice to Bear* by David Rockwell¹¹; in which he talked about how people around the world who revered bears often spoke to them through nicknames rather than the word "bear" itself. I asked the two bears what they thought, and they liked the honor.

Grandfather Silvertip is a black bear; he takes away the illnesses and negative energy with his claws. Grandmother Silverclaw is a grizzly; she adds in the healing energy once Grandfather is done. I also honor them in the West quarter. They tend to be patient with me, though occasionally I'll get a particularly insistent nudge from them if I'm not paying enough attention.

Badger: This is another newer totem; he's helped me be successful in my job hunt. I wanted to work with a totem who would help me utilize my stubborn streak for a good cause, and Badger was the one who volunteered. Of course, there are other areas of my life where persistence could be helpful, though I also need to balance that with patience.

Cat: I started working with Cat a few years ago when I wanted to become more comfortable with my sexual self. Being a very sensual creature herself, Cat came to me with her brother Panther and helped me to become more accepting of pleasure and pain. I also learned to be more comfortable in my own body and in my self-image, and to be more confident. You know how some people can wear certain colors, and others can't and often it has less to do with looks and more with the way the person carries herself? I could never wear red until I started working with Cat—first just a little splash of it, and then more, usually accented with black.

Cougar: Cougar has actually had two separate and distinct manifestations in my life. Back in 2004, in my totemic personality aspecting experiment, Cougar represented Hostile Strength—the protector. He only came out every so often, and only when he was needed for strength. Other than that he hung in the background, waiting patiently.

More recently, though, he's shown more of his playful feline side, teaching me to not take things so seriously, and that even the toughest person can still be a kitten at times. I'd been so stressed in the past few years that I'd forgotten to take time out to play and have fun, and Cougar has been helping me to rebuild this need.

Horse: I've always had somewhat of a Love/Hate relationship with Horse. Horse was the second totem to ever work with me; he basically came in and took over for

¹¹ Roberts Rinehardt, 1993.

Wolf during my teenage years. He worked to help me deal with the anxieties of adolescence, as well as the stress of the social fishbowl that is public high school.

Unfortunately, my focus on Horse led to a lot of teasing from my peers, who just thought I was some “horse crazy” girl. I was already pretty unpopular, and this didn’t really help (since supposedly this was something that only children went through, not “grown-up” 15 year olds who should be more interested in boys and makeup). So I became ashamed of Horse, and was actually relieved when Wolf came back in my senior year. I’m still working to rebuild that relationship in a healthy manner, both with Horse, and with that part of my life.

Hawk: My primary relationship with Hawk is as my East animal. Hawk represents focus and mental clarity, as well as new beginnings and the promise of a new day.

Greybaby: Greybaby isn’t really a totem, but he is an animal spirit. Specifically, he’s a wolf spirit who has taken up residence in a small stuffed toy wolf I bought not long after I was first introduced to magic. Like most stuffed critters, he’s a good sleeping buddy, and is small enough I can comfortably cuddle him while I sleep, or tote him around in a backpack or large pocket if I need support throughout the day. He’s my version of a security blanket, and the first protective spirit I really connected to. He doesn’t look particularly ferocious, but he does his task well.

The Skin Spirits: This is a collective term I use to refer to the spirits of the animals within the skins, bones and other animal parts in my home, especially those that are in my personal collection rather than destined for new homes elsewhere as artwork. The first one I really connected to was in the first full wolf pelt I ever brought home. If any of you have ever seen me dancing around the fires at Brushwood, you’ll know the one I’m talking about. While a lot of the spirits are slumbering, waiting for me to call them out so we can create new artwork, there are generally at least a few wandering around my home at any given time (not physically, of course!). The spirits of my various dancing skins are known for snagging me by a sleeve as I walk by when they want to dance or otherwise need to talk to me about something.

I realize that my listings here are primarily Big, Impressive North American Birds and Mammals (BINABM). I have done some work with others, but I’m saving the meat of that discussion for my next book on animal magic. The above are the totems that have most influenced my spiritual path over the years; they’re not the limit of my totemic and spiritual allies.

Chapter 3: Tools of My Trade

Like a lot of magicians and pagans, I have a set of ritual tools. I used to be bad about collecting things and then never actually using them, but over the years I've pared down my collection to just the essentials. Here's a summary of the tools I use the most, and what they're for.

Athame: I admit that while I don't have the intense fascination with sharp, shiny objects that some other pagans do, I am pretty fond of my athame. It's actually the second one I've used; the first one only last a couple of years, and I ended up giving it to a friend. The one I have now is a handmade (not by me) deer antler handled knife with a single edged blade and a brass pommel and hilt. I bought it at the same shop where I got my first artwork supplies, and it's been one of my favorite tools ever since. I use it primarily for directing energy, usually when creating sacred space. However, I have occasionally used it as a cutting tool in a few rituals when a sharp edge was called for. This, more than just about any other tool, has my energy invested in it.

Staff: Early in my practice I was driving down a back road and stopped at a creek to sit and watch the water go by on a nice summer day. Spinning in an eddy was a branch, just about my height and the perfect size for my hand. The water had stripped it of its bark, and it grabbed my attention immediately. I fished it out and put it in the back of my truck to dry. When I got home, I spent hours sanding it, then let it sit for a few months to let the various bugs that had taken up residence in it relocate.

One day I was holding the staff, trying to figure out what to do with it, when I started seeing animals in the grain of the wood. Not insects, but the forms of mammals and birds and reptiles and other creatures within the swirls and lines of the wood grain. Inspired, I took out my box of acrylic paints and spent weeks painting the animals to bring them out of the woodwork—literally!

Once I was done, I tried experimenting with the staff in ritual. I found that it worked best as an evocation tool, acting as a channel for totems and other animal spirits to enter into the ritual area. I also used it as a way of marking which totems I'd worked with; I made sure that each one was represented at least once in the wood grain (sometimes having to hunt a little bit for the right spot), and I tied a piece of fur, feather or bone from that species to the staff to help aid the connection.

Bowl: This is an old hand carved wooden bowl I found in an antique shop, again early in my practice. I primarily use it for offerings, and occasionally as a stand for

candleholders. It's not particularly flashy, but it's very attractive in an Earthy, simple sort of way.

Candles: I admit that I really like candle magic. It's simple, efficient, but it gets the job done. I've used it for everything from offerings to casting sigils. Generally what I'll do is use rituals to evoke or invoke the entities I'd like to help me with whatever my purpose is, and then we'll all work together to charge the candle with appropriate energy. I light the candle, and then close down the ritual and let it burn down. I'm a big fan of those little four inch long candles that take about two hours to burn for one-shot magical workings. They help me to continue the magic even after the ritual itself is done and over with.

Dance Costumes: These are a collection of animal skins of various species that I've collected over the years. Some of them I'll dance with while they're draped over my entire body; others I'll simply hang over one shoulder as we dance.

Skindancing allows an easy invocation both of the spirit of the skin himself, and the corresponding totem. Not only do we get to create some really wild magic together, but I also get a chance to see through the eyes of another animal. Additionally, the spirits have the opportunity to wear a body again, something that they really seem to appreciate. Along with my wolfskin, I also have a bear that used to be an old rug, a deer (complete with antlers), a fox, a rabbit, and a number of others.

I've danced my wolf the most. The first time was at Brushwood during the summer of 2002; I stripped down and wore nothing but the skin (it's a clothing optional pagan site), and danced for hours around the drum circle. It's always an amazing experience, because not only am I invoking the spirit of the skin, but I also go through a very intense mental/perception shift (in regards to my therianthropy, which I'll explain in more detail later). While my body itself never changes, the way I use it does. I move as close as I can to the way a wolf moves, and the energy is just incredibly intense. I've gotten a lot of feedback from people who witnessed the wolf dancing in particular. It really seems to inspire folks, and I've had plenty of instances where I had the pleasure of people dancing with me as wolves, imitating my moves and bringing that energy into themselves. That's some of the most amazing magic I've ever been honored to participate in.

Art Supplies: Some of my best magic comes from artwork. Needles, thread, paint, scissors and Exacto knives are the main players here, and it's with these that I take skins and bones, feathers and beads, and make them into magical creations. The act of creation produces gnosis, the single-pointed focus necessary for magic to work. Sometimes I use it for meditation, other times I simply allow myself to merge with the animal spirits for a while.

Necklace: A lot of pagans have ritual jewelry, or sacred items they rarely remove. Mine is a necklace I got the summer between high school and college, not long

after...oh, you get the idea. Almost all the important things in my practice stem from the first two or three years after my introduction to all things magical.

That summer I took my very first trip to Seattle, a graduation gift. While visiting my family I stopped by a gift shop near the infamous Space Needle. They had a wide selection of scrimshaw necklaces made from fossilized mammoth tusk, and I found the perfect one for me. The pendant had (surprise, surprise) a wolf face on it, and the necklace itself was made of bone and glass beads of various types and colors. It quickly became my favorite necklace, and I rarely went without it through most of the next decade.

A few years later, I received my very first wolf claw as a gift from the owner of the Native supply shop. I tied it to the necklace so that it dangled down behind the pendant, and it's been there ever since. The only time I removed it was after I moved to Seattle; I had felt called to move to the city ever since that first visit, and for nearly a decade I waited. Once I got there, I took the necklace in to see if it could be re-inked, as the design had faded somewhat. I left the wolf claw at home, not wanting it to get lost. Sadly, the pendant couldn't be restored without being entirely sanded down because so much of my skin oil had soaked into it that the ink wouldn't absorb. I opted to keep it as-is, and while the design isn't as dark as it used to be, I can still see the wolf's eyes watching the world as we walk through it together. These days the only time I take it off is to shower, and I put it back on as soon as I dry.

Altar: My altar has had the same basic setup throughout the years. I generally construct it according to the four directions. I have a statue of each of the quarter animals, and in the center or at the sides representations of other deities and entities. Currently my bowl, athame and a couple of candle holders are the only tools I have; I used to clutter it with a lot of tools I never actually used, just to try to be "traditional". I originally used my childhood toy box as my altar and storage space, but now that I am owned by a cat I find that I need to keep it higher up on top of the wood burning stove.

Those are pretty much my main magical tools. I have others, but they don't see nearly as much use as the ones listed. I'm perfectly capable of open-hand magic, but there's something to be said for years of emotional and energetic attachment, too.

Chapter 4: Rituals and Other Workings

I vary from year to year as to how much ritual work I do. I've never been a daily routine kind of person, preferring spontaneity. As of late I've been wanting to do more regular work, though not necessarily on a daily basis, so I figure sooner rather than later there'll be more experimentation going on.

My rituals tend to follow a pretty generic neopagan format—create sacred space, invoke/evoke anyone else involved, do the magic, make the offerings if applicable, say goodbye to everyone and close up shop. I don't always do the full routine for every act of magic I create, but I use it for the majority of them. The exception is most magic involving artwork—I'm so used to getting into an artistic mindset that I automatically create sacred space and evoke as I'm getting my tools together and deciding who to work with. It's the same regardless of whether I'm making something to be sold or given away as a gift, or a magical pouch or poppet for a specific purpose.

Daily Prayer

Something I've been trying to do lately is to incorporate some form of daily observance to reconnect with my FFG on a regular basis. I'd been feeling pretty spiritually disconnected, and it was having a definite adverse effect on me. Sometimes everyday life gets in the way of more esoteric pursuits, and after a while this can be a disaster!

This particular prayer gives me a chance to touch base with the most...well...I don't want to say most important members of my FFG, because they're all important. Maybe "most influential" is a better description. While this is how the prayer is structured as of this writing, I add or remove entities as relationships change. Removal doesn't mean that I no longer have any interest in working with them; however, the ones who are mentioned in this prayer tend to be whoever I'm most active with at the time. I try to pray once in the morning before I go off to work (or whatever I have planned that day) and once in the evening as I'm falling asleep. I may also use it at various times throughout the day when I feel the need for a little grounding and centering.

*I thank all of those who have given me this day
Earth Mother, Sky Father, Lady Huntress,
Wolf Who Is Me and Who I Am
All My Friends, Family, Guardians
All those who have given of themselves to feed me, clothe me, shelter me,
Protect me, teach me and heal me
And all those who have allowed me this day.*

You honor me by your presence.

I thank Deer for the dreams, and I ask for good dreams tonight.

I thank Greybaby for the protection for me and my mate at night.

I thank all the guardians of the home for keeping it safe while we sleep and while we're away.

As I mention each individual, I feel the internal connection I have to him “ping” me, letting me know that my prayer has been acknowledged. This reassures me, as well as reminds me that the connection is always there when either one of us needs it.

Creating Sacred Space

I understand the concept that all space is sacred, and therefore open to magical work. However, sometimes I need to get myself into the proper mindset for magic and/or meditation, whether I'm simply celebrating help with a successful endeavour, or preparing to journey into the thick of my psyche. I'm better with more active forms of magic and meditation, and so having a rite to help me clear out my head and get focused on the work at hand helps me more than sitting in one place trying to let all the thoughts float away like little clouds (or whatever simile you want to use).

I've used this basic formula pretty much from the beginning of my practice. While the details have changed, the primary inspiration came from a combination of Scott Cunningham's *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* and Ted Andrews' *Animal-Speak*, which were two of my earliest books on magic.

Purify the ritual area by sweeping it three times widdershins with a broom. Start in the center, and work your way outward, going out a little further with each time around. As you sweep, visualize all the energetic clutter being swept out of the area.

Next, get the athame and hold it in the left hand (I'm a southpaw). Stand in the North quarter, facing outward. Say:

Great Black Wolf of the North Wind,

I greet thee, and I ask thee to watch over me this day/eve.

Visualize a large black wolf in a lush green forest before you. In my case, Wolf usually uses my body as a conduit to enter the ritual area, as do all the spirits I work with. I know he's here when I momentarily astrally shift to wolf form. It's the same way with all of them. Feel the lean-muscle body coated in warm fur, dull claws digging into soft, moist earth. Once Wolf has arrived, say,

You honor me by your presence.

Then trace a large green pentacle in the air before you with the athame, starting from the top down to the lower right corner, and so forth, with a deosil circle.

Reach up with the blade and draw down a quarter sphere of green Earth energy. Obviously you'll have to stop the blade when it hits the floor or ground, but it goes all the way down. Within this quarter there are trees, and bushes, and dark green moss, with vines trailing through—the domain of Wolf.

Next, trace a line of energy from the very center of the North quarter to the very center of the East quarter; your arm should extend from your shoulder at a 90 degree angle, with the tip of the athame at the very end. Stand facing outward in the East quarter, and call on Hawk:

*Great White Hawk of the East Wind,
I greet thee, and I ask thee to watch over me this day/eve.*

Visualize a hawk with a white belly, such as a redtail, swooping through a bright yellow sunlit sky and landing on a branch. Feel your astral form shift to a hawk, and stretch your wings and spread your tail feathers. Then say,

You honor me by your presence.

Trace a large yellow pentacle in the air before you, and draw down a quarter sphere of yellow Air energy. Feel the warm sunlight on your face, and the cool breeze ruffling your feathers; take a deep breath.

Draw a line of energy from East to South, and then call on whatever animal(s) you happen to be working with to create change in your life. Over the years I have welcomed Bison, Horse, Stag, Coyote, Fox, Lynx, Cat and others in this quarter. As of this writing I call on Fox for help rejuvenating my magical practice, and Lynx for learning to choose my words more carefully. When calling Fox and Lynx together, half of my body goes to each of them, split down the middle vertically, during the shift.

*Great Red (animal) of the South Wind,
I greet thee, and I ask thee to watch over me this day/eve.*

See the animal come forth, surrounded by flames, and full of fiery power. Then say,

You honor my by your presence.

Draw a red pentacle in the air, and a quarter sphere of red Fire energy. Feel the heat, not only of flames, but of the internal combustion of your body, your metabolism, and the changes that are wrought in your microcosm every second.

Trace the line of energy from South to West; call on the Bears. There are two Bears in my West. Grandfather Silvertip is a black bear; he pulls out the ill health and dis-

ease during healing rituals. Grandmother Silverclaw is an Alaskan brown bear; she adds in healthy energy.

Great Yellow Bears of the West Wind, Grandfather Silvertip, Grandmother Silverclaw, I greet thee and I ask thee to watch over me this day/eve.

See the two bears before you, standing on rocks at the edge of a roaring river full of fat, nourishing salmon. Say,

You honor me by your presence.

Create a blue pentacle in the air, and the quarter sphere of Water. Hear and feel immense amounts of water splashing all around you like a waterfall, crashing into that area of the ritual space.

Pull the energy around back to North to complete the circle. Then retrace the circle deosil three times while saying:

I cast this circle in the name of the Earth Mother, the Sky Father, Lady Huntress, Wolf Who Is Me and Who I Am, all my Friends, Family and Guardians, all those who have given of themselves to feed me, clothe me, shelter me, protect me, teach me, and heal me, and all those who have allowed this ritual this day/eve.

Feel the presence of all those you have invited enter into the ritual area through your body, the sheer power almost too much to bear, and yet as welcome as a big hug and hello. Then say,

You honor me greatly by your presence.

At this point you may proceed with whatever celebrations and magic you had planned.

Holidays

As I noted earlier, February 8 is a special day for me, one that I mark each year by having an in-depth conversation with Artemis, my matron goddess. I generally don't do much celebrating of holidays these days, though I'd like to change that at some point soon. For the most part, when I do observe the Sabbats, I take time to note what the natural world is like. The Sabbats are nicely spaced because there's enough time in between them for something to have happened, but not so much time that I totally lose track of the cycles. I also sometimes have celebrated Lupercalia, though I do so to honor Lupa, my namesake, rather than taking a more traditional reconstructed view of the holiday.

Magical Pouches

One of the first forms of magic I worked with were magical pouches. I'd start by making a small pouch, maybe two inches by three inches, out of scrap leather. I'd then add in herbs and stones according to Cunningham's works¹² on the topic, and paint the pouch with an appropriate totem based on my own UPG as well as information picked up from various totem animal dictionaries that sounded like it worked. Some of my earlier ones also reflected my interest in runes at the time.

For the most part, these were pretty simple creations made for common purposes. I've included the "recipe" for the healing pouch, the first one I ever designed, just for interest's sake. The correspondences are primarily out of Cunningham's works, with some UPG thrown in.

Create a 2" x 3" drawstring pouch out of blue fabric or leather (if fabric, make sure you can paint on it without it soaking through entirely), stitching it with silver thread (no golden needles required). Add strings to wear it around your neck if you like. On the front of the pouch, paint a bear holding the rune Berkana in her front paws with silver paint. Bear is the totem of healing, and is a lunar animal, hence the silver paint to also invoke the power of the moon. Both the moon and Bear are sacred to Artemis, my matron goddess, who also aids me in my magic.

Once the paint is dry, put a few small pieces of amethyst and aventurine, which both have healing properties, into the pouch. Add a pinch of mullein and chamomile, as well as whatever other herbs are specifically associated with the illness or injury being healed. Add in a leaf of sage (the type used for smudging, not cooking) to help keep the energy of the pouch "clean".

Finally, take a small stone bear pendant and tie a bit of brown bear hair and a bit of black bear hair on its back, sort of like a Zuni fetish. The black hair draws out the illness, while the brown hair invites healing energies. Tie the pouch firmly shut. Charge a blue candle with healing energy and inscribe it with Berkana and the patient's name. Light the candle and hold the pouch over it (though not so close as to set it on fire! Allow the energy of the candle's heat to infuse the pouch. Hold the pouch in your hands and "seal" that energy into it. Give or send it to the recipient as soon as possible after this. S/he may wear the pouch, carry it in hir pocket, or hang it near hir bed.

Most of my magical pouches follow the same basic formula, with appropriate correspondences. While I've done plenty of workings that are a lot more complex, this is one of my favorite techniques, and it's proven itself to be quite effective.

¹² Cunningham, Scott. *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* (1988) and *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Crystal, Gem and Metal Magic* (1987).

Menstrual Magic

For whatever reason, I started keeping track of my menstrual periods in 1995, when I was 16 years old. With few exceptions, I would mark on my calendar the days I had my period from beginning to end. In more recent years I've also kept track of what time of day they start, what sorts of medications I'm on that may affect them, and the strength of the flow from day to day.

This serves a practical purpose. I can gauge my health by how regular my cycles are, and how heavy the flow is. If it's been a particularly stressful month, I may start menstruating earlier, which is a sign for me to calm down. A lighter flow generally means I'm not eating enough, and so I bulk up especially on proteins as well as drink extra fluids.

However, there's a spiritual aspect to it as well. Menstruation is a connection to Artemis in her role as protector of women (while I identify as androgynous, I still acknowledge that my body and genetics are female). Earlier in my magical career, when I was more about feminist approaches to the Goddess, I would burn a candle every month that had some of my menstrual blood on it. Sometimes it would be for a specific purpose, but other times it was simply for the celebration of being me, and that I was in good health and good hands.

And there's a hell of a lot of energy that's produced by menstruation. Cramps are painful, but the focus on that pain can be diverted for magical purposes. Once I started practicing Chaos magic, I sometimes used my cramps to cast sigils. I figured that as long as I was required to suffer once a month, I might as well get what I could out of it.

For years I've worn a piece of fossilized coral in a small pouch around my waist for the duration of my period. I don't remember quite what prompted me to start this; call it random inspiration. Every month when my period starts, I put a little of the blood around the hole in the center of the coral. This serves to collect energy from that month's cycle in the coral, which can be used in magic later on. Over time I've found that the "memory" of years of cycles has helped to regulate my body more, too. There's a definite difference when I forget to put on the pouch at the beginning of menstruation!

One more personal celebration involved with menstruation is the fact that, if I'm menstruating, it means I'm not pregnant. This may seem a little silly, particularly to those of you who are actively creating families through biological means. However, I've never been a fan of personally having children. I have neither the time nor the patience nor the desire to do so. Sex is wonderful, but I prefer to not have any little nine-month accidents. And being childfree gives me an additional amount of freedom, something that ties back in with my relationship with Artemis. So sometimes we have a monthly celebration about the fact that I am, once again, not pregnant.

You can see more of my writings on this topic in a *Sagewoman* article I wrote, found at <http://www.sagewoman.com/images/pdfs/sw67featurelupa.pdf>.

Chapter 5: So What's That Whole Therianthropy Thing About?

I've dropped this word a few times in this study of my practices. Some of you are probably familiar with the concept, but for those who aren't, here's a *very* basic understanding of it. Otherkin are people who, in some (generally nonphysical) manner, believe that they are not entirely human. The most common explanation people give is that they were a nonhuman being in a past/alternate life, and that life imprinted on them enough to where they still identify as that being in this life (some attribute it to actually having a nonhuman soul). Other folks may explain it as being a human with nonhuman energy, having an odd quirk of psychology or neurobiology, or (in rare cases) genetic anomalies that are consistent through certain types of Otherkin (though this has never actually been tested).

Therianthropes are people who identify as nonhuman animals on a (generally nonphysical) level¹³. For instance, I am a wolf therian. I believe that, spiritually, energetically, and psychologically, there is part of me that is more wolf than human. I don't turn furry and howl at the full moon, but there is part of me that understands the world from a lupine point of view and for whom human mannerisms and behaviors are a bit confusing.

This isn't something new; ever since I was very young I've felt at times that I was born into the wrong body, that I was supposed to be a wolf instead of a human. Not that I don't enjoy being human; I don't have that bad a case of species dysphoria. But I do also allow for the part of me that is wolf, and I have integrated that aspect of myself into the rest of me well enough that I tend to simultaneously experience life both with human-mind and wolf-mind. Occasionally I'll shift closer to one end of the human-wolf continuum or the other, depending on my needs, but for the most part I'm pretty well settled in the middle.

It's entirely possible that I'm stark raving mad, or at least too escapist for my own good. But this is something that has persisted for almost my entire life, the feeling that I'm not in the body I was supposed to be in, and that I should have been a wolf instead. I express the wolf parts of myself through the medium of a human body and brain as best as I can, with all its limitations. Yes, most humans could access the more primitive parts of themselves with enough effort and breaking down of boundaries, and I know neoshamanic types who do it routinely through ritual shapeshifting. But that doesn't make them therians; it's not something that's a 100%, 24/7 part of who and what they are.

¹³ It should be mentioned here that not all therianthropes consider themselves Otherkin. In fact, some therians think all Otherkin are absolute flakes—apparently it's okay to believe you're a nonhuman animal, but not okay to identify as a dragon or elf.

And yes, it's primarily experiential and very subjective. I acknowledge that. I can't get you into my head so you can perceive for yourself. If you don't believe me, that's fine--no skin off of my back. But this is a part of what explains "reality" to me; therianthropy is part of what informs my perception of both my personal, internal microcosm, and the macrocosm-at-large that I share with all other forms of consciousness. I am functional, and beyond that I am content and satisfied with this explanation and interpretation of myself. Maybe there are other ways to explain me and the way I am, but this is the structure that I have had the best success with for my own needs. Just as I work the type of magic I get the best results from, so do I, engineer of my own consciousness and perception of reality, work with the understanding of these things that works best for me.

Therianthropy and Spirituality

Therianthropy isn't a religion or a type of magic; for some people it's a form of psychological quirk, and for others it's simply a way to explain the parts of themselves that humanity doesn't cover. It varies from person to person. That being said, it can be a very spiritual experience for some therians.

In my own case, therianthropy ties in closely with totemism. I view totems as external, archetypal beings; having a totem does not make one a therian. My primary totem is Wolf, though, and therianthropy is part of how I relate to hir. I also have found that because I can shift at will from human mindset to wolf mindset, that this makes it easy for me to invoke other entities and allow my own consciousness to slide to the side to allow whoever's being invoked in.

There's no such thing as a physical shapeshift, at least nothing dramatic. The most I've gotten was a fairly consistent change in eye color. I have hazel eyes, and there's a ring of amber around the pupil that sometimes expands during shifts. It's been witnessed by other people who have seen me shift, but I doubt it'll convince anyone (me included) that physical shifting is possible. I shift nonphysically quite a lot in magic, particularly energetically, perceptionally, and spiritually. Whenever I evoke one of the animals of the quarters, or any totem, I feel myself briefly energetically shift to that animal; it's how I know that the evocation was a success. I have an internal connection to each entity I work with, and while these are not therianthropic in nature, they do have a similar effect, though not as intense. (Of course, it's possible that I'm only splitting hairs—or hares--in differentiating between my internal connections to Wolf and, say, Rabbit.) I also deliberately use shifting as a form of invocation (or vice versa, if you prefer). And it's entirely possible to invoke parts of yourself as well as external independent beings. So the lines are actually pretty blurry there.

Speaking of shifting, I've found that standard neoshamanic shapeshifting rituals, the kind that can be found in any of a number of totemism 101 books (including Andrews' *Animal-Speak*), can be used to induce therianthropic shifts. This was a very useful in the years after my initial Awakening to that aspect of myself, when the Wolf aspect fought for more balance with the Human aspect,

which resulted in involuntary shifts any time I wasn't giving my Wolf self enough attention. The neoshamanic rituals were excellent for "taking the wolf for a walk", as it were. These days I'm balanced enough between Wolf and Human that I very rarely ever involuntarily shift. However, if I feel like being more Wolf than Human for a while, a little drumming and dancing is all it takes to get a really deep shift going.

In fact, some totemic magic can be altered to aid newly Awakened therians (or more experienced ones) who want to have a better connection to that which is not human in them. Just as it's possible to evoke (not invoke) aspects of yourself to have a conversation with them in a neutral, detached manner, so it's possible to evoke your therioside in the same manner as a totem. Why would you want to do this? Well, I know that when I was younger and didn't have as much control over myself, sometimes it helped me to have an "imaginary" conversation between my Human and Wolf selves. Since the Human self was the one I understood better, I took on that role while speaking to the Wolf self as if it were a separate being (temporarily). This allowed me to step back a bit from that part of me and look at it more objectively to figure out what was needed to make both sides more harmonious. The important thing to keep in mind, of course, is that a therioside is NOT a separate, external being; the division between Human and Wolf was artificially and temporarily created for the purpose of self-examination.¹⁴

However, it's the natural world where my therianthropy and my spirituality most mix. Whether the therianthropy contributed (along with many other factors) to my love of nature or not, I'm not sure, though I suspect it had at least some paw in it. Through the wolf aspect of myself I've learned to appreciate details in nature I might otherwise miss if I were only perceiving things as human. That doesn't mean that non-therians can't appreciate nature, of course; it simply means that for me, personally, seeing the world through the eyes of a wolf aids in that appreciation.

Nothing quite matches a full mental, energetic and spiritual shift while running full-tilt through the woods, though. That, to me, is the closest I get to "Heaven" on Earth. In that moment, everything falls away but me, feeling for all the world that I run on all fours, wind in my fur and carrying scents to my nose, every little sounds around me telling me about the life that abounds. I connect with my environment to a degree never experienced elsewhere; pure instinct kicks in, and I am able to navigate even the tightest gaps in the trees with ease. It is a time of pure Flow and Grace, and nothing can stop me. The only thing that reminds me that I am still in human flesh is the eventual winding down of this experience—but in the meantime, it's the best shamanic journey I could ever go on, even though the purpose is for the experience itself.

¹⁴ I'm tempted to do some more writing on therianthropy and magic and where they intersect in my life. This isn't the place for that, but perhaps in the future something will manifest.

Afterword

This is the first time I've really sat down and thought about my spirituality; it's always been something I mostly kept to myself. I feel comfortable talking about it—I just never thought anyone would be interested. But here you are, reading it, so I assume you must have some interest in it, and I thank you for that.

It amazes me that, no matter how my magical practice has delved into experimental regions, my spirituality remains, at its core, the same as it was when I first got started. I take that as a good sign. Early on I was a little worried that maybe I was just fooling myself, that perhaps I should just go back to the flock. However, the basics of my beliefs have withstood the test of time, and while some of the details have evolved along with me, a lot of my early beliefs and spiritual practices remain an important part of my life today.

I find this comforting, especially now that I'm beginning to head back into the spiritual side of things and really exploring that part of who and what I am. When I first started studying paganism, I wanted to find the beliefs that really explained Life, the Universe and Everything to me. I had to find them on my own, despite being raised with the idea that Truth had to be conveyed by someone else. My early insecurities have been long since overturned by the proof that it is quite possible for me to make my own path up the mountain and make my connection to the Divine.

May you find the same peace in yourself.

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Bibliography and Other Influential Books

This is a listing of some of the more influential books on my path, though certainly not the sun total of my reading over the years. I've left out the utter dreck, such as the really bad plastic shamanism books, as well as some of the early Wiccan material that really wasn't all that great to begin with.

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